

T H E P A C I F I C P L A N

FOR STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION

niu pasifika



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PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM & ITS SECRETARIAT

The Pacific Islands Forum, formerly the South Pacific Forum until a name change in October 2000, was founded in August 1971 and comprises 16 independent and self-governing states in the Pacific. The Forum is established by a treaty between its members as the region's premier political and economic policy organisation. Forum Leaders meet annually to develop collective responses to regional issues.

The Forum's membership has increased from the original seven founding members (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga and Western Samoa - now Samoa) to also include the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. New Caledonia and French Polynesia, previously Forum Observers, were granted Associate Membership in 2006. Current Forum Observers include Tokelau (2005), Wallis and Futuna (2006), the Commonwealth (2006), the United Nations (2006) and the Asian Development Bank (2006), with Timor Leste as Special Observer (2002).

The Pacific Island Forum's agenda is based on issues raised by members, and reports from the Secretariat and other regional organisations and committees. Decisions by the Leaders are reached by consensus and are outlined in a Forum Communiqué, from which policies are developed and a work programme is prepared. The annual Forum meetings are chaired by the Head of Government of the Host Country, who remains as Forum Chair until the next meeting.

Since 1989, the Forum has held Post Forum Dialogues with key Dialogue Partners at Ministerial level. There are currently thirteen partners - Canada, People's Republic of China, European Union, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom and the United States of America. A review of the Post Forum Dialogue process was commissioned by the Forum Secretariat following the directive of the Forum Leaders for a reassessment of its arrangements and the criteria for membership. The report and its recommendations were considered at the 2006 Forum Leaders' Meeting, and work continues towards improving the quality of the dialogue process.

The Forum's administrative arm is the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, based in Suva, Fiji. It acts as the Secretariat for Forum-related events, implements decisions by the Leaders, facilitates the delivery of development assistance to member states, and undertakes the political and legal mandates of Forum meetings. The Secretariat is funded by contributions from member governments and donors with a total budget in 2006 of around FJ\$36 million.

The Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General. The Forum Officials' Committee (made up of representatives from all Forum Governments) is the governing body for the Secretariat and oversees its activities. The Secretary General is also permanent Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) that brings together 10 main regional organisations in the Pacific region:

Fiji School of Medicine (FSMed)

Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)

Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP)

Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)

South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

south-pacific.travel (formerly the South Pacific Tourism Organisation - SPTO)

University of the South Pacific (USP)

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FORUM MEMBER COUNTRIES

AUSTRALIA COOK ISLANDS FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA FIJI
KIRIBATI NAURU NEW ZEALAND NIUE PALAU PAPUA NEW GUINEA
REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS SAMOA SOLOMON ISLANDS TONGA
TUVALU VANUATU

FORUM ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

FRENCH POLYNESIA NEW CALEDONIA

FORUM OBSERVERS

TOKELAU WALLIS AND FUTUNA COMMONWEALTH
ASIA DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) TIMOR-LESTE



MESSAGE FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT SECRETARY GENERAL

Greetings from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. I am pleased to present the June instalment of Niu Pasifika, the Forum's quarterly publication with a focus on implementation of the Pacific Plan.

As we strive to achieve the strategic development objectives of the Plan, the Pacific Islands Forum and development partners remain dedicated to communicating related progress to the peoples of the Pacific. Niu Pasifika is a means of achieving this. I also encourage you to visit our website, www.forumsec.org, to access further digital information pertaining to the work of the Forum Secretariat, as guided by the Pacific Plan. Also see the Pacific Plan website, www.pacificplan.org.

Perhaps more so than ever before, the dissemination of digital information is increasingly pertinent to the growth of all development sectors. Within the Pacific Plan, advancement of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is guided by the Pacific Regional Digital Strategy. In this edition, Niu Pasifika seeks to inform its readers, among other things, on the tangible benefits of engaging a Digital Strategy for our region (turn to page 6).

My best wishes to you all, and happy reading.

Greg Urwin
Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General



KEY FACTS ABOUT THE PACIFIC PLAN

A comprehensive guide for taking the region forward New era of enhanced cooperation • To improve the lives of Pacific peoples

Pacific Leaders have called for the serious challenges facing the countries of the Pacific to be met through sharing scarce resources and aligning policies to strengthen national capacities to support their people.

They have called for a Pacific Plan to strengthen regional cooperation and integration as the main instrument for realising their Pacific Vision. The Plan forms the basis of ongoing strengthening of regional cooperation and integration for the benefit of the peoples of the Pacific.

The Pacific Plan has now been revised in line with its status as a 'living' document, responding to the region's challenges and emerging priorities. The Pacific Forum Leaders meeting in October 2006, and the resultant 'Nadi Decisions on the Pacific Plan', prioritised a number of key commitments in order to further strengthen regionalism in the Pacific.

At the regional level, implementation of the Pacific Plan is, in the first instance, the responsibility of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, to provide policy advice, coordination and assistance in implementing their decisions.

Political oversight and guidance to the Secretariat is provided by a Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC), chaired by the Forum Chair and comprising representatives of all Pacific Island Forum Countries. The Forum Chair (as Chair of PPAC), reports to Leaders on the implementation of the Plan on a six-monthly basis, focusing on the benefits and outcomes for Pacific countries. A small implementation unit, reporting directly to the Deputy Secretary General, is established in the Secretariat to support the PPAC and coordinate implementation and reporting on the Plan.



OIL PRICE SHOCKS DRIVE PACIFIC MINISTERS TO ENDORSE ACTION

Significant potential damage to vulnerable Pacific economies from world oil prices has prompted Pacific Energy Ministers to endorse a new approach to energy use and consumption.

Energy ministers, representatives and officials from 17 Pacific countries concluded four days of discussions in the Cook Islands in April this year, with a Ministerial Energy Communiqué declaring joint commitment to overcome serious energy security challenges.

Director of the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) Cristelle Pratt, said Pacific Island countries are deeply concerned about their extreme vulnerability to moderate increases in oil prices.

“If oil rises by just \$10 a barrel, some countries in the Pacific face a loss of up to 14 per cent of gross national income. This will have a major impact on the social welfare of local communities and this concern has generated a commitment to urgent action,” Ms Pratt said.

Ministers endorsed a regional fuel procurement strategy as a matter of urgency, after reviewing regional and national energy initiatives and policies, and listening to technical reports on bulk petroleum purchasing, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

Minister from the Federated States of Micronesia, Akillino Susaia, said that because of high costs and big risks for oil companies operating in smaller countries, there is a need to examine bulk petroleum purchasing to increase bargaining power and help provide security, affordability and stability of energy supplies.

The Communiqué highlighted a greater need for comprehensive donor technical assistance and for biofuel and petroleum strategies to be integrated. Regional institutions such as the University of the South Pacific will be invited to increase technical capacity support for emerging renewable energy initiatives such as wind, solar, hydropower and biofuels.

“Energy is also a key driver of economic growth that has a significant impact on education, environment and health in the Pacific, so energy must be integrated and prioritised in national development plans for economic development,” Ms Pratt said.

Other commitments included a need for sustainable energy policies and action plans to ensure initiatives progress in line with national expectations, and that power utilities and distribution facilities improve efficiency and governance of pricing and services.

“Having countries from all over the Pacific endorse a whole of government approach to energy as a development imperative is a great outcome. We are now all committed to sharing regional experiences and expertise in renewable sources, and energy efficiency and conservation,” Ms Pratt said.

Energy Ministers will urge Pacific Forum Leaders to incorporate energy issues into the economic planning and reform agenda of Forum Economic Ministers from 2008.

Participants were Australia, Cook Islands, Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Tonga, PNG, FSM, Nauru, NZ, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands.

PIPSO SETS UP SECRETARIAT



PIPSO
Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation

The region's private sector will now benefit from the establishment of a Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), set up in April at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji.



Henry Sanday
PIPSO Executive Officer



Marina Pene
PIPSO Administrative Officer

PIPSO is the premier private sector representative body in the Pacific Islands region. It was established in April 2005 to ensure dialogue between public and private sectors for strengthening regional policy making.

The organisation has been supported by the Forum Economic and Trade Ministers, as well as Forum Leaders, and is identified in the Pacific Plan, as a strategic partner in the development of the region's private sector.

"PIPSO is the united voice of the region's private sector, covers large, medium and small enterprises, a sector which plays such a critical role in the economic development and poverty alleviation within PICs. It is for this reason that the Forum Secretariat is happy to host the "Secretariat of PIPSO," said Greg Urwin, Secretary General of the Forum Secretariat.

"The implementation of the Pacific Forum's Private Sector Development Strategy requires a strong and vibrant private sector. The establishment of a home for PIPSO will see better planning and effective implementation mechanisms."

In partnership with the Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Centre of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing technical assistance to the new PIPSO Secretariat Office. The Pacific Islands Business Forum, organised by PIPSO, will be held from 6th to 7th



FORUM SUPPORTS WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Freedom of the media will play a pivotal role in the development of the Pacific region.

This was the resolve of the Pacific Islands Forum on World Press Freedom Day, 3rd May 2007, as noted by Secretary General, Greg Urwin.

"World Press Freedom Day serves as a reminder to all that we must endeavour to support the development of a free and independent media industry," said Mr Urwin. "Doing so will help our region achieve principles of good governance and promote accountability across the board."

Mr Urwin noted that the media plays an important role in supporting the implementation of the region's development priorities, as identified in the Pacific Plan.

"The dissemination of information to the public pertaining to the progress of regional development is a priority," said Mr Urwin.

"In order for our member countries to tangibly benefit from regionalism at the country-level, people need to be informed of the possible benefits of doing so."

Mr Urwin added that a free and impartial media industry in the Pacific serves to foster well-informed communities and encourages healthy debate on key public-interest issues.

August, followed by the PIPSO Annual General Meeting on the 9th to 10th of August in Nadi, Fiji.

The Chair of PIPSO's Interim Board of Directors, Mr James Movick from the Federated States of Micronesia, expressed gratitude to both the Forum Secretariat and UNDP for their assistance.

"With an administrative office now in place at the nerve center of regional economic and policy decision-making we expect to be able to improve the level and nature of private sector cooperation with governments in the formulation and implementation of regional and national economic policy," Mr Movick said.

PACIFIC REGIONAL DIGITAL STRATEGY

Pursuing 'ICTs for every Pacific islander'

The Pacific Regional Digital Strategy is an integral part of the Pacific Plan.

Seeking social and economic empowerment for Pacific islanders, as well as a solution to the 'tyranny of distance', the Strategy aims to realise the potential of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).



Children in the Solomon Islands were amongst the first in the Pacific to trial the XO-1 laptop

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE PACIFIC REGIONAL DIGITAL STRATEGY

Priorities:

- Improving access to communications technology
- Reducing ICT costs
- Establishing higher bandwidth to the global ICT backbone
- Removing inappropriate regulatory environments in order to foster higher levels of investment
- Strengthening ICT skills

Imagine... One laptop per child in the Pacific...

"It's an education project, not a laptop project."

— Nicholas Negroponte, OLPC Founder and Chair

Two years ago, the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) initiative was launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (January 2005).

XO-1 is the inexpensive laptop computer envisaged to provide access to modern forms of education to children around the world, particularly those in developing countries.

Still in its prototype phase, the laptop is being developed by the OLPC trade association, a U.S. based, non-profit organisation founded by the Michigan Institute of Technology (MIT).

This year, support for this initiative in the Pacific was announced by Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Dr Jimmie Rodgers.

"When we look at the number of children across the Pacific without the opportunity to either go to school or pursue further learning, something like this may provide us with a long-awaited solution," he said.

The initiative, according to Dr Rodgers, will target the region's six to seven million youth in the 6-17 year-old bracket.

"We see OLPC being an important initiative for furthering the Pacific Regional Digital Strategy, as well as the Pacific Youth Strategy, prioritised in the Pacific Plan," he remarked. "However, this can only be made possible if the issue of region-wide internet connectivity is addressed."



XO-1, the inexpensive laptop of the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) initiative

Dr Rodgers noted that building the infrastructure to support such an initiative will be important.

"We are currently exploring the procurement of a hub that would allow us to channel communication to all Pacific islands," he said.

"Such a system would not seek to compete with in-country telecommunication companies. At the end of the day, it will be about partnerships, and making a difference to the lives of Pacific peoples."

"This is a rare opportunity to promote education outreach, health services, agricultural development, fisheries development, you name it, we could carry all of these through the OLPC initiative."

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is supportive of the OLPC initiative, said the Forum's Economic Infrastructure Adviser, Mr John Budden.

"There are potentially far-reaching economic benefits of reducing the cost of access to ICTs," said Mr Budden.

"We must also endeavour to tailor this into a Pacific-relevant initiative, in order to best tap into the tangible benefits of such a promising project."

Revolutionary laptop in Solomon Islands

SPC is promoting a pilot project in the Solomon Islands linked to the existing Ministry of Education Distance Learning Centres Project being implemented by the People First Network. This will test a locally-designed model for the distribution and use of OLPC laptops. In anticipation of this, the Ministry has been given a "B2" prototype unit that was displayed at the opening of Vuranimala DLC with children demonstrating the features. The laptop was also a hit when shown to children at Henua School, in Rennell recently.

"We hope that Solomon Islands children will soon show the region how the OLPC laptops can provide them with a window to the world and marvelous new ways of learning, both in and outside the classroom," says David Leeming in charge of the Distance Learning Centres Project set in place by the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education.

DID YOU KNOW?

- A whopping 1,114,274,426 Internet users are estimated worldwide (2007 est) – yet that's only 16.9 per cent of the total world population.
- The term 'cyberspace' was coined by William Gibson in his 1984 novel "Neuromancer" about a futuristic computer network that people used by plugging their minds into it! The term now refers to the notional 'information-space' of computer-aided communication.

An eye on the Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC)

"Internet is for everyone."

Internet Society Vision

Cyberspace is rapidly materialising in the Pacific.

This is evident from the growth of Internet usage across Forum Island Countries (FICs) estimated at over 200 per cent over the past seven years.

An indispensable communications tool for many in the region, the Internet could also be described as a complete mystery to others.

Its usage in FICs is currently estimated at only 7.3 per cent of the region's population. As outlined in the Pacific Regional Digital Strategy:

"Few inhabitants of the Pacific Island Countries are able to enjoy the benefits of access to telecommunications and the Internet. Those with access are faced with slower speeds and much higher costs than in the developed world..."

Born out of a desire for participatory development of the Internet in the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC – pronounced pik/ai/soc) is playing an active role in highlighting pertinent issues affecting the direction of the Internet's development in the region.

PICISOC covers 22 Pacific island states and territories with a membership of over 400 individuals in the region. It is an active Chapter of the Internet Society (ISOC), a professional membership organisation with around 100



Continued from previous page

organisational and over 26,000 individual members in more than 180 countries.

“It is important for the people of our region to be kept well informed of the developments affecting the Internet in the Pacific, as well as internationally,” said PICISOC Chair, Rajnesh Singh.

“The value of people actively participating in this will play a key role in shaping this important medium to best fit our unique needs, and keeping us on par with the rest of the world.”

PICISOCers keep each other clued-up on Internet issues via a membership-wide email list.

PacINET is the Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of PICISOC, being held this year from August 15th-24th in Honiara, Solomon Islands, with the theme ‘National ICT Strategy Building’.

“PacINET is a regional conference for practitioners, developers, researchers and those generally interested in ICT from all sectors,” said Mr Singh. “It is an opportunity to exchange information on the system design, enabling technologies, and anecdotal experiences related to the use of ICT in Pacific Islands.”

Mr Singh noted that PacINET covers technical and non-technical ICT issues, and this year will touch on topics and themes such as ‘e-Health Initiatives in the Pacific’, ‘Building Connected Communities’, ‘the Open Source World’, ‘e-Government and the Pacific’, ‘Internet: Safety, Security and Censorship’, ‘ICT in Education’, ‘VoIP (R)Evolution’, ‘IPv6’, ‘Women in Technology’ and ‘New Media’.

The Forum Secretariat will be supporting the Regulators’ Summit at PacINET 2007.

For more information on PICISOC, PacINET, or to become a PICISOC member, visit www.picisoc.org.

An eye on PACIFIC TRANSPORT SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Vanuatu ratifies PIASA

Vanuatu has become the fifth Forum Island Country (FIC) to ratify the Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement (PIASA).

Official PIASA instruments of ratification from Vanuatu were received in March by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, which acts as the depository for such legal documents.

PIASA is a regional agreement that will provide a multi-lateral basis for liberalising air services between FICs. Its main objective is to establish a framework for the gradual integration of aviation services of Forum members in a way that is fully supportive of sustainable development in the region.

The Agreement will come into force when six countries in total have officially ratified it.

Currently Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Nauru, and now Vanuatu, have ratified PIASA.

Niue embarks on new chapter in aviation

Niue also formalised its commitment to the Pacific Islands Air Services Agreement (PIASA) in March, as well as the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO).

The Premier of Niue and Minister for External Relations and International Relations, Honourable M Young Vivian, signed PIASA while in Port Vila, Vanuatu, for the Forum Foreign Affairs Ministers’ Meeting.

Hon. Young Vivian also handed over the instrument of accession for the Civil Aviation Safety and Security Treaty (PICASST), sealing Niue’s membership of PASO, the body responsible for regional aviation safety oversight for its members, including that of airport and airline operational safety and security standards.

“This is an important milestone for the region’s aviation



Pacific maritime sector prioritises health

Pacific Island maritime authorities are set to increase efforts to promote awareness of health issues that may pose threats to people working in the industry.

One of the issues discussed in April at the 11th Meeting of the Pacific Islands Maritime Association (PACMA) was the link between the maritime sector and HIV.

“The burden of addressing health issues such as HIV and AIDS cannot be left only to the health sector,” said Captain John Hogan, Regional Maritime Programme Manager at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

“None of our health sectors have the budgets they wish they had, so we all have a responsibility to help where we can,” he said. “For its part, the maritime sector accepts that this challenge is part of the cost of doing business.

“Our interest is also linked to the fact that healthy people are happier people, which has positive outcomes for employers, their staff and the public.”

Capt Hogan noted the international nature of shipping means that people working at sea or in land-based operations need to have greater awareness of their personal health circumstances.

“Addressing this issue includes a strong focus on education to help prevent illness in the first place,” he stresses. “Treatment is a far more costly exercise than prevention, and the ability of some island countries to provide the required support services is limited.

“Medical issues such as HIV and AIDS remain a serious concern for Pacific Island countries. Without better awareness of their impacts in all sectors, including maritime, there is potential for these and other medical conditions to affect the long-term health of people working in the industry, which in turn has an impact on skilled personnel, productivity and planning.”

industry,” said Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General, Greg Urwin.

Mr Urwin also noted that the “Nadi Decisions on the Pacific Plan”, released by Leaders at the 2006 Pacific Islands Forum Meeting held in Fiji last October, affirmed the importance of intensified regional action to ensure effective transportation within the region, focusing on the needs of Smaller Island States (SIS), including Niue.

“I commend Niue for identifying and embarking on a collaborative, regional approach to assist with its own national development priorities,” remarked Mr Urwin. “This is the nature of regionalism - finding our strength in numbers in order to build capacity in-country.”

Forum Secretariat Transport Sector Adviser, Seiuli Alvin Tuala, explained that PIASA will enable Pacific carriers to increase their sphere of activities to take advantage of the benefits of regional alliances and cooperation.

“The proliferation of bilateral air service agreements is difficult and time-consuming, creating barriers for multi-destination tourism, investment and industry development.” said Mr Tuala.

“While the region strives to achieve these aviation developments, it is also very important to prioritise safety and security standards, which is why it makes sense for Niue to become a member of PASO as well.”

Mr Tuala explained the benefits of becoming a member of PASO include reduced cost for safety oversight for members to ensure they meet international standards and obligations, building capacity at the national level, and the provision of an advisory service to national aviation authorities of participating States.

PASO, based in Port Vila, Vanuatu, is an international regional organisation set up under PICASST, and called for by Forum Leaders in the Pacific Plan.



PROGRESSING PARTNERSHIPS

“We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.”

Extract from the Forum Leaders' Vision in the Pacific Plan

Partnership launched for HIV/AIDS prevention

A regional affiliation was announced in February this year to develop a programme on HIV/AIDS for the Pacific sports community.

The partnership between the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNAIDS Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV/AIDS and Development (APLF), Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC), Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) also sealed these organisations' commitment to overcoming stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

Speaking at the launch in Suva, Fiji, Forum Secretary General, Greg Urwin, remarked that sport is an effective way of giving young people purpose and structure in their lives.

“Sport and physical education are about participation, inclusion and a sense of belonging,” said Mr Urwin. “They provide a means for the development of qualities such as discipline, confidence and leadership.”

He noted that with so many languages and cultures, existing sports networks provide mechanisms that can be utilised to educate, inform and importantly, hear the views of people on their needs and aspirations.

“This is keeping with the spirit of the Pacific Plan, in which Forum Leaders have directed us to ‘develop a strategy to support participatory democracy and consultative decision-making’.”

Mr Urwin remarked the aim of the Pacific Plan is to achieve the vision of our Leaders - that all of our people should be able to live free and worthwhile lives.

“We must all help overcome stigmas and discriminations, to make the vision of our Leaders become a reality.”

Also speaking at the launch, UNICEF representative for the Pacific, Dr Isiye Ndombi, said the complexity of HIV/AIDS requires the forging of strategic partnerships such as these.

“This partnership provides us all an opportunity to reflect on how we all can work together in scaling up HIV prevention work in order to promote primary prevention and address the issue of stigma and discrimination for those living with the virus,” said Dr Ndombi.

“I wish this partnership all the best, and may we win the match for our people.”

Regional workshop powers up sustainable development issues

Renewable energy, rainwater harvesting and waste management were the central focus of a regional workshop held recently at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

The Sustainable Development Workshop, facilitated by Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), convened in March in Suva, Fiji, to discuss and deliberate on these issues.

The workshop was an initiative of the Government of India, organised in collaboration with TERI and the Forum Secretariat.

“The Government of India last year announced grant aid to Forum Island Countries (FICs) worth US\$14 million, alongside various capacity building training schemes, including this workshop,” explained Jared Morris, the Forum Secretariat's Import Management Adviser.

“It is also important to note that India has aligned its development assistance to the region with priorities identified by Leaders in the Pacific Plan, such as renewable energy, water and waste management.”

The commitment from the Government of India was made at the 18th Post Forum Dialogue Partners' Meeting, held following the Forum Leaders' Meeting in Nadi, Fiji, last October.

“While building capacity in the three focal areas of this workshop, this is also an excellent opportunity for participants to further strengthen inter-country networks



and share experiences,” said Ms Patricia Sachs-Cornish, the Forum Secretariat’s Development Cooperation Advisor. Ms Sachs-Cornish explained that at the regional level, renewable energy is supported by the Pacific Islands Energy Policy (PIEP), and water harvesting through the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Plan and the Harvesting the Heavens Guidelines and Participatory Manual. Waste management is covered in the Regional Waste Management Strategy.

“The challenge is translating these policies and strategies into actions and initiatives that make an impact on individuals and communities in-country.”

Over the course of the workshop, representatives of TERI will share practical examples of related initiatives, technologies and projects that have been successful in India.

“This offers participants an opportunity to consider how to transfer or adapt experiences from India to best suit our region and countries, where appropriate,” added Ms Sachs-Cornish.

The workshop aimed at giving participants a thorough appreciation of related sustainable development issues faced by PICs, common experiences and practical Government interventions.

The workshop also sought to foster understanding amongst participants of tools available for data analysis and consequent development of national policies and action plans.

Workshop participants included representatives from the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, and observers from the Indian High Commission, Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Forum Secretariat.

SERVING PACIFIC ISLAND COMMUNITIES

By Maureen Penjeli, Communication and Advocacy Adviser, FSPI

As dawn breaks over the mountains of Kadavu, an island in southern Fiji, a mother turns a tap on to access clean water. The days when she had to trek to the river early in the morning to fetch drinking water, along with other women and children, are now a remote memory...

“Unfortunately this scenario remains a distant dream in many isolated and rural communities of the Pacific,” says Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI) Executive Director, Rex Horoi.

“The difference in this village is that they were linked to the right people – a district officer and small grants donor – FSPI – to turn a dream into running tap water.”

FSPI is a regional Non-Government Organisation (NGO) that believes in being that link according to Mr Horoi.

“FSPI whose asset is Community Connectivity, strives to strengthen and facilitate links between key players in society to help Pacific communities foster self-reliance and achieve sustainable development in a rapidly changing world,” he says.

Founded in 1965 by Betty Silverstein and Father Stan Hosie, concerned by the devastation of World War II, the FSP network was launched around a leprosy outbreak in Malaita in the Solomon Islands. By 1969, FSP had become a major international organisation providing resources for community centres, technical schools, scholarships, agriculture and water supplies.

Today, the network is the largest secular civil society network in the Pacific with members in 10 Pacific island countries: Timor-Leste, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, with two metropolitan partners in Australia and the USA. The USA Partner, Counterpart International (formally FSP USA) is the direct descendent of Betty Silverstein’s 1965 initiative.

As the regional secretariat for the FSP network, FSPI has coordinated and implemented a range of project activities aimed at addressing the diverse development needs of Pacific Island communities.

Currently these activities are streamlined into five regional Programmes: Governance, Communities and Coasts, Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation (MORDI), Health, and Community-Based Disaster Management.

“FSPI believes in empowering communities and engaging constructively with governments in the region,” adds Mr Horoi.

“Strengthening linkages between policy at government level, and action at community level will therefore remain critical components of our vision of placing communities at the forefront of programme design and implementation in the coming years.

“Central to our functions as the Secretariat of a regional network is our ability to communicate effectively with national, regional and international stakeholders.

“The lesson here is not just about tapped water, but about the importance of linking and supporting rural isolated communities in the Pacific with the resources and knowledge needed to meet their own development goals and aspirations.”

For further information contact FSPI - P.O.Box 18006, Suva Fiji Islands, phone: (679) 331 2250, fax: (679) 331 2298, or visit www.fspi.org.fj

www.pacificplan.org www.forumsec.org



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Niu Pasifika welcomes opinion, story and photograph contributions.
Contact Mue Bentley, Media Officer, Pacific Plan, via mueb@forumsec.org.fj to make a contribution to the next issue.
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